2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

east, the seat of the "creators." Blood sacrifices were made only to evil deities and not to the "creators." In front of the altar stood the steward with the owner of the drove and his wife on either side of him. All three faced east where dwell the benevolent deities. In a row on the right side of the altar stood nine innocent youths and on the left nine virgins with goblets filled with kumiss consecrated to the benevolent deities. The participants were clad in splendid festival attire, trimmed with valuable fur, silver pendants, and other decorations.

The steward addressed a prayer to the "creators," begging for blessings: increase of horses and cattle, a good harvest of hay, good health for the people and animals, and an abundance of food. Then he took the kumiss festival ladle (*ysyax xamyyaha*) and made a libation, in the direction of the dawn, to the benevolent deities. Then, while making a libation to the ground, he addressed the local deity, "the owner of the place" (*ān doidu iccilā*), asking him not to harm the inhabitants of the spot and the members of the clan. After that, the steward, with the help of the sacrificial ladle, proceeded to prophesy. He threw the ladle towards the sky, and if it fell with the bowl part upwards, it portended the granting of future abundance by the deities and all the people uttered the joyful, cry, *Uru!*

Then, according to the directions of the steward, the boys and girls gave the goblets of sacrificial kumiss to the elder and honored members of the clan, both male and female, who placed themselves to the right and left of the altar, drank from the goblets and passed them on to the less important and the younger people. Behind every honored or aged member of the clan, sat or stood his domestics, less esteemed relatives, young men, and laborers, whose welfare was his responsibility. When the goblet was emptied, it was returned to the steward or host to be filled.

At the same time, not far from the altar, other stewards were preparing tables, or simply boards on the ground, on which were placed piles of horse and cow meat and dishes of melted butter. Every chief of a family or clan received a large portion of meat and butter, which he divided among his people.

The whole day passed with songs, round dances, games, races and other contests, and shamanistic performances. The poetical choral songs of the young men and girls, in praise of the spring and love, were very interesting. Middendorff[1] and Sieroszevski[2] recorded some of these songs. During the kumiss festival the change from winter to spring was

[1] Middendorff, *ibid.*, Part 2, 1578.
[2] Sieroszevski, *ibid.*, Vol. 1, 587 et seq.

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

dramatized in a contest between two men. One, dressed in white, represented spring, and was called "son of creator" (*ayi uola*); the other, clad in black, represented winter, and was called "son of evil spirit" (*abasy uola*).

The autumnal festival was celebrated in honor of the destructive forces and was therefore called *abasy-ysyax*. It was dedicated to the evil spirits (*abasylar*), the inhabitants of the west and the representatives of darkness and night, in order that they may not interfere with them in winter, when starvation, disease, and death are imminent. This festival also took place in the open air, but at night.

The first night, the ceremony was in honor of Big-Lord (*Ulu-Toyon*) and the evil spirits of the upper world subordinate to him. The ceremony of the second night was in honor of *Axsan Duolai* and his subordinates, the evil spirits of the lower world. To all of these evil spirits, in addition to the libations of kumiss made to the benevolent deities, blood sacrifices of cattle and horses were also made. This ceremony was superintended by nine male and nine female shamans.

Kumiss Vessels and their Decorations

Kumiss vessels may be divided into three types, according to form:—

1. The *corōn*, a very large urn-shaped goblet with a small base holding from ten to fifteen liters of kumiss. Their small bases make them unstable. To drink from them, they must be held with both hands. Three large goblets of varying sizes are reproduced in Fig. 91. Two of them, in addition to the engraved decorations, are ornamented with silver hoops and pendants and one with pendants of red cloth and hair from a horse's mane.

2. *Us ataxtāx corōn*, i.e., tripod goblets of smaller size are illustrated in Fig. 90. Fig. 90*a* is ornamented with silver rings.

3. Cylindrical vessels with set-in bottoms of varying sizes, and named according to their size, the small one, *mācax;* and the large ones, *ymyja*.

All these drinking vessels are made from the strong, tough wood of the polar birch tree. The first two types are carved and hollowed from one piece. Formerly the adze was the implement used for hollowing but recently a chisel. The finish, polish, and decoration are accomplished with knives only. The sides of these goblets are made very thin and they easily crack when drying. A goblet left empty in the sun for a single day is sure to crack. To guard against injury, they are kept in a dark, damp place, and are also freely oiled with melted butter, which gives them a

7: Shklovsky -- 202-203 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut-1-2
116, 796, 536

"There was unusual excitement in Yakutsk about an affair which had happened a few days previously. It was customary, at Christmas time, throughout the holiday, for all classes to go out in masquerade. Singing and playing on musical instruments, they went in groups from one house to another, and at each house where the inmates were willing to receive the masqueraders a lantern was hung out. All the big officials consider it their duty to receive them, but on this occasion some unpleasantness had occurred. The Vicè-Governor gave a kind welcome to the masqueraders, and they began to perform a little 'play,' in which different official institutions were represented, the local police, the court, the Treasury, etc. One masquerader wore the uniform of a general, and the others addressed him in verse, petitioning for various reforms. Their requests were modest, and were wittily expressed, and the Vice- [203] Governor applauded the masqueraders and touched glasses with them. They next went to the house of another official, again they performed their little show, were well received, thanked and their health drunk. And so on to a third and a fourth house, by which time the masqueraders began to show signs of the frequent health drinkings. Their tongues were loosened, and they added new couplets to the verses. The masquerader representing the general began to talk, and then to make speeches in parody of the speeches of a local official. It was quite an excitement. Next day search was made for the 'general,' and rumour said he was to be exiled to Kolymsk. None of the masqueraders could be found anywhere; however, at last they presented themselves to apologise for their freak. They

were all young local officials and teachers. The punishment was not very serious; they were placed under arrest only for a few days."

53:Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2

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415
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Dance of girls with chorons (kumys pitchers). Amateur performance at collective farm.

Theatre

545 During the time of the Soviet regime a Yakut national art with new forms completely unknown in Yakutiya in the pre-Revolutionary period has blossomed. Before the Revolution Yakuts did not know about the theatre, and music and singing were only found in their most primitive form. In 1925 members of the drama group attached to the People's Russian Theatre in Yakutsk was formed into the Yakut National Troupe, and in 1930 a Yakut National Theatre Studio was set up. From the very first years of its existence the actors set themselves the task of a realistic portrayal of Yakut life, denunciation of the merchants and toyons, and demonstration of the greatness of the Socialist Revolution. The theatre gradually attracted young Yakut actors and actresses who had graduated from the Central Theatre School and Studios. They performed works by Soviet-Yakut dramatists with great success.

Art

532 For centuries Yakutiya has been known for its applied ornamental art, but professional artists only began to appear in the last quarter of the 19th century.